



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INFORMATION SERVICE

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2/10/56

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release FEBRUARY 10, 1956

CANADIAN MARKED TRUMPETER SWANS FOUND NEAR RED ROCK LAKES

An identification band from a dead trumpeter swan found in the Island Park area of eastern Idaho last summer has led to the Fish and Wildlife Service obtaining definite proof of the intermingling of the American and Canadian flocks of trumpeters, Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay said today.

The mixing of these flocks has long been suspected but hitherto unproved. Positive evidence was secured when a special inspection of the wintering grounds turned up three cygnets marked with the yellow plastic leg bands placed on them by field personnel of the Dominion Wildlife Service in Canada. Since blizzards prevented a complete inspection of the wintering flock, more Canadian-marked swans may have been present, and some of the unmarked adult swans are probably part of the flock which has its "home" grounds across the border.

Island Park, Idaho, is just across the State line from the Red Rock Lakes Migratory Waterfowl Refuge in southwestern Montana, the principal home of the American flock of trumpeters.

The dead swan, which triggered the special winter visit to the area, had been banded at Saskatoon Lake, near Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada, on August 22, 1954, by R. N. Mackay of the Dominion Wildlife Service, about 850 miles north of where it was found by J. R. Fisher of Blackfoot, Idaho. The usual range of the Canadian trumpeter is from Grande Prairie in the summer to Vancouver Island and northward along the coast in the winter, reached by flights less than half the distance to Island Park.

The winter inspection was made by Winston E. Banko, Manager of the Red Rock Lakes Refuge, who visited the area on January 26 and 27. He reported one marked cygnet flying with a small group of swans and two others moving in another flight. The yellow plastic leg bands were easily discernible through binoculars, he said. He reported also that an employee of one of the lodges in the area noticed a large cygnet with the yellow leg band some weeks earlier. Mr. Banks believes that this evidence suggests that the occurrence of the Alberta trumpeters in Island Park is not merely an accident but probably results from a regular seasonal movement.

Previously, all observations and recoveries of marked birds had indicated that the American trumpeter is practically nonmigratory, seldom moving more than 100 miles, and staying close to its regular habitat in the Red Rock Lakes-Yellowstone Park-Jackson Lake-Island Park area. Because the trumpeters require large areas for breeding purposes--each family insisting upon about a square mile of territory--and because of the growth of the Red Rock flock, Service officials have suspected that

some of the American birds have been crowded out of the area and have probably migrated to Canada; but up to the present time, there is no definite evidence of that movement. However, recent developments will lead to closer scrutiny of both American and Canadian flocks in the future.

The trumpeter swan, which was near extinction in the United States a few decades ago, has come back until now the flock fluctuates around 600 birds. There is also the somewhat larger Canadian flock and additional trumpeters in Alaska.

The trumpeter was believed to have numbered in the thousands in the middle of the last century, and was generally considered to be a migratory bird. Skin hunters and others who shot the bird for sport or profit all but exterminated it. There is still the supposition that the Red Rock Lakes trumpeter lost its migratory inclination because warm springs in the area provided an ideal wintering situation.

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